Robert L. Starr, Bar No. 183052 FRED CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT robert@starrlawmail.com THE LAW OFFICES OF ROBERT L. STARR 23277 Ventura Boulevard MAR 2 7 2014 Woodland Hills, California 91364-1002 Telephone: (818) 225-9040 Facsimile: (818) 225-9042 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALFORNIA Stephen M. Harris, Bar No. 110626 smh@kpclegal.com KNAPP PETERSEN & CLARKE 550 North Brand Boulevard, Suite 1500 Glendale, California 91203-1922 Telephone: (818) 547-5000 Facsimile: (818) 547-5329 9 Attorneys for Plaintiffs TRISH HERREMANS, individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated individuals 11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 12 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 13 14 BUX 14-2363 MMM TRISH HERREMANS, individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated [CLASS ACTION] individuals, 16 CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT Plaintiffs, 17 FOR: 18 ٧. Violations of California 1. Consumer Legal Remedies Act BMW OF NORTH AMERICA, LLC, Violations of Business and 2. **Professions Code Section** Defendant. 20 17200 3. Fraud 21 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL** 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

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INTRODUCTION

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- 1. Plaintiff Trish Herremans ("Plaintiff") brings this action for herself and on behalf all persons in the States of California ("Class Members") who purchased or leased certain herein defined Mini Cooper vehicles ("Class Vehicles"), manufactured, distributed, and sold by BMW of North America, LLC, and/or its related subsidiaries or affiliates ("BMW" or "Defendant").
- 2. BMW widely advertises the Class Vehicles as being of the highest quality and durability, asserting in marketing materials that "Not all small cars are created equal", and that Class Vehicles are safe and reliable vehicles.
- 3. The Class Vehicles consist of all Mini Cooper R55 model vehicles (also known as model year 2007 present Mini Cooper Clubman; All Mini Cooper R56 model vehicles (also known as model year 2007 2013 Mini Cooper hardtop); All Mini Cooper R57 model vehicles (also known as model year 2009 present Mini Cooper Convertibles); All Mini Cooper R58 model vehicles (also known as model year 2012 Mini Cooper Coupe); All Mini Cooper R59 model vehicles (also known as model year 2012 Mini Cooper Roadsters); and All Mini Cooper R60 model vehicles (also known as model year 2010 present Mini Cooper Countrymen).
- 4. Because of defects in the design, in the water pump of Class Vehicles, the Class Vehicles, and their respective water pumps, have experienced water pump problems, such as water pump leakage, and water pump noise, "the Water Pump Defect". With regard to water pump leakage, this poses a serious safety hazard, because it can result in an effected vehicle's engine overheating. Engine overheating can result in a catastrophic engine failure while the effected vehicle is in traffic. When an engine fails to function in traffic, the effected vehicle loses the ability to accelerate. Furthermore, the effected vehicle's steering and braking abilities are severely diminished, due to the power braking and power steering system not being able to properly function. These conditions are clearly a safety

hazard. Furthermore, when a water pump makes noise, the noise is often an indicator that the water pump will soon leak and/or fail to function, resulting in the herein described safety hazards.

- 5. In addition to the safety hazards, the costs of the Water Pump Defect to consumers can be and often are exorbitant, because consumers have been and will continue to be required to pay hundreds, if not thousands of dollars both to diagnose and repair the damages caused by the Water Pump Defect. Additionally, the presence of the Water Pump Defect in the Class Vehicles has resulted in the vehicles having diminished value, thereby depriving plaintiffs and the Class Members of the benefit of the vehicle (and its value) that they paid for.
- 6. It is Plaintiff's information and belief that BMW, through its own internal testing, records of customer complaints, dealership repair records, and other internal sources, was well aware and knew of the Water Pump Defect prior to BMW distributing the Class Vehicles to Mini Cooper dealerships. Furthermore, it is Plaintiff's information and belief that BMW knew of the Water Pump Defect prior to Plaintiff suffering damage as a result of the Water Pump Defect. BMW failed to disclose and actively concealed the Water Pump Defect to consumers at the time of purchase or lease, and thereafter. BMW continues to conceal the existence, nature, and extent of the Water Pump Defect to consumers, even though the Water pup Defect is a very serious problem which poses a safety hazard to purchasers and lessees of the Class Vehicles, as well as to the general public.
- 7. BMW knew or should have known that the Class Vehicles were defective and not fit for their intended purpose of providing consumers with safe and reliable transportation, due to the Water Pump Defect. Nevertheless, BMW actively concealed and failed to disclose the Water Pump Defect to Plaintiff and the Class Members at the time of purchase or lease and thereafter.

- 8. BMW is aware of the Water Pump Defect, as stated above, but routinely denies consumers requests for reimbursement of the expenses incurred in connection with the Water Pump Defect. There have been numerous consumer complaints concerning the Water Pump Defect, lodged both with BMW and with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Notwithstanding BMW's knowledge of these complaints, BMW has refused to warn consumers about the defect, has refused to remedy the Water Pump Defect, and has refused to compensate consumers for the damages resulting from this defect.
  - 9. As a result of BMW's misconduct alleged herein, Plaintiff and the other owners and lessees of Class Vehicles have been harmed and have suffered actual damages. The actual damages are that Class Vehicles continue to experience mechanical failure and water pump leakage due to the Water Pump Defect, and that BMW has not reimbursed consumers for money expended due to the Water Pump Defect.

#### **PARTIES**

### Plaintiff

10. Plaintiff resides in the state of California. Herremans purchased a new 2009 Mini Cooper ("Vehicle") on or about November 15, 2008. The Vehicle was purchased primarily for personal, family and household non-commercial purposes. This vehicle was manufactured, sold, distributed, advertised, marketed and warranted by BMW, and bears the Vehicle Identification Number WMWMF73579TT95691. California Civil Code Section 1761(a), which defines goods, does not restrict its definition to goods which are new. Nor does the definition of transaction in subdivision (e) in this statute require that the good is new, and the definition of consumer in subdivision (d) does not require the item purchased by the consumer to be a new item. The same principle applies all of Plaintiff's theories.

- 11. On or about February 12, 2011, at 43,667 miles, Plaintiff's Vehicle underwent repairs due to the water pump leaking. The repairs were covered by the manufacture's limited warranty. On or about January 11, 2013, at 71,272 miles, Plaintiff took the Vehicle to Nick Alexander due to the water pump leaking. This time the repairs were not covered by the manufacture's limited warranty, resulting in Plaintiff having to pay several hundred dollars for repairs. It is Plaintiff's information and belief that the water pump leaking and repairs were necessary due to the Water Pump Defect.
- 12. On January 7, 2014, Plaintiff forwarded to BMW a letter pursuant to the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, requesting a remedy relating to the Water Pump Defect. BMW failed to respond substantively to the January 7, 2014 letter.

#### **Defendant**

BMW is a Limited Liability Company organized and in existence under the laws of the State of New Jersey and registered with the California Department of Corporations to conduct business in California. At all times relevant herein, BMW was engaged in the business of designing, manufacturing, constructing, assembling, marketing, distributing, and selling automobiles and other motor vehicles and motor vehicle components throughout the United States of America.

### **JURISDICTION**

- 13. This is a class action.
- 14. Members of the Proposed Plaintiff Class are citizens of states different from the home state of Defendant.
- 15. On information and belief, aggregate claims of individual Class Members exceed \$5,000,000.00, exclusive of interest and costs.
  - 16. Jurisdiction is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d).

**VENUE** 

- 17. BMW resides in this district such that personal jurisdiction is appropriate. Defendant is deemed to reside in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a).
- 18. In addition, a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to these claims and a substantial part of the property that is the subject of this action are in this district.
  - 19. Venue is thus proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a).

APPLICABLE LAW

20. California State law applies to all claims in this action.

**FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS** 

- 21. For years, BMW has designed, manufactured, distributed, sold, and leased the Class Vehicles. BMW has sold, directly or indirectly, through dealers and other retail outlets, thousands of Class Vehicles.
- 22. Because of defects in the design, in the water pump of Class Vehicles, the Class Vehicles, and their respective water pumps, have experienced water pump problems, such as water pump leakage, and water pump noise, "the Water Pump Defect". With regard to water pump leakage, this poses a serious safety hazard, because it can result in an effected vehicle's engine overheating. Engine overheating can result in a catastrophic engine failure while the effected vehicle is in traffic. When an engine fails to function in traffic, the effected vehicle loses the ability to accelerate. Furthermore, the effected vehicle's steering and braking abilities are severely diminished, due to the power braking and power steering system not being able to properly function. These conditions are clearly a safety hazard, and can result in death or serious bodily injury. Furthermore, when the

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- water pumps make noise, the noise is often an indicator that the water pump will soon leak, resulting in said safety hazards.
- The occurrence of the Water Pump Defect is the result of the water 23. pump installed in the Class Vehicles being defectively designed, manufactured, and installed. Plaintiff does not know at this time if the Water Pump Defect has resulted in traffic accidents, however, numerous class members have complained of the Water Pump Defect.
- The Water Pump Defect is a safety hazard, both for occupants of the 24. Class Vehicles driven on the road, and for pedestrians, and occupants of other vehicles on the road.
- In addition to the safety hazards, the costs of the Water Pump Defect to 25. consumers can be exorbitant, because consumers are be required to pay hundreds, if not thousands of dollars both to diagnose and repair the damages caused by the Water Pump Defect. Additionally, the presence of the Water Pump Defect in the Class Vehicles has resulted in the vehicles having diminished value, thereby depriving Plaintiff and the Class Members of the benefit of the vehicle (and its value) that they paid for.
- It is Plaintiff's information and belief that BMW, through its own 26. internal testing, records of customer complaints, dealership repair records, and other internal sources, was well aware and knew of the Water Pump Defect prior to BMW distributing the Class Vehicles to Mini Cooper dealerships. Furthermore, it is Plaintiff's information and belief that BMW knew of the Water Pump Defect prior to Plaintiff suffering damage as a result of the Water Pump Defect. BMW failed to disclose and actively concealed the Water Pump Defect to consumers at the time of purchase or lease, and thereafter. BMW continues to conceal the existence, nature, and extent of the Water Pump Defect to consumers, even though the Water Pump Defect is a very serious problem which poses a safety hazard to purchasers of the Class Vehicles, as well as to the general public.

- 27. BMW knew or should have known that the Class Vehicles were defective and not fit for their intended purpose of providing consumers with safe and reliable transportation. Nevertheless, BMW actively concealed and failed to disclose this defect to Plaintiffs and the Class Members at the time of purchase or lease and thereafter.
- 28. BMW is aware of the Water Pump Defect, as stated above, but routinely denies consumers requests for reimbursement of the expenses incurred in connection with the Water Pump Defect. There have been numerous consumer complaints concerning the Water Pump Defect, lodged both with BMW and with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. BMW has refused to warn consumers about the defect, has refused to remedy the Water Pump Defect, and has refused to compensate consumers for the damages resulting from this defect, despite BMW's knowledge of the Water Pump Defect.
- 29. As a result of BMW's misconduct alleged herein, Plaintiff and the other owners and lessees of Class Vehicles have been harmed and have suffered actual damages, in that the Class Vehicles continue to experience mechanical and water pump failure due to the Water Pump Defect. Owners and lessees of Class Vehicles have incurred, and will continue to incur out of pocket unreimbursed costs and expenses relating to the Water Pump Defect.
- 30. The Class Vehicles come with a basic 4 year / 50,000 mile warranty. BMW began selling the Class Vehicles in 2006.
- 31. BMW refuses to cover or pay for repairs relating to the Water Pump Defect which occur outside of the warranty period.
- 32. Furthermore, BMW fails to warn customers about the Water Pump Defect, and about the effects of the Water Pump Defect on the Class Vehicles, which makes the Class Vehicles susceptible to the engine overheating which can result in a catastrophic engine failure.

33. It is Plaintiff's information and belief that the Water Pump Defect is a pervasive defect affecting every single Class Vehicle, and posing a serious safety hazard for the general public.

### BMW Has Exclusive Knowledge Of The Water Pump Defect.

- 34. BMW has superior and exclusive knowledge of the Water Pump Defect, BMW knew that the defect was not known or reasonably discoverable by Plaintiff and Class Members prior to their purchase or lease of the Class Vehicles.
- 35. Only BMW had access to information about the significant risks associated with the Water Pump Defect relating to the Class Vehicles, through BMW's dealerships, pre-release testing data, warranty data, customer complaint data, and replacement part sales data, among other internal sources of aggregate information about the problem.
- 36. The existence of the Water Pump Defect is a fact that would be considered material by a reasonable consumer deciding whether to purchase or lease a vehicle. Had Plaintiff and other Class Members known that the Water Pump Defect existed, they would not have purchased the Class Vehicles. Reasonable consumers, like Plaintiff, expect and assume that a vehicle will not have the Water Pump Defect, and will be safe to operate. Plaintiff and Class Members further expect and assume that BMW will not sell or lease vehicles with known safety defects, such as the Water Pump Defect, and will disclose any such defects to its consumers when it learns of the defect. Reasonable consumers do not expect BMW to fail to disclose the Water Pump Defect, and to refuse to fix the Water Pump Defect.

**BMW Has Actively Concealed The Water Pump Defect** 

- 37. While BMW has been fully aware of the Water Pump Defect in the Class Vehicles, BMW has actively concealed the existence and nature of the Water Pump Defect from Plaintiff and Class Members at the time purchase or sale and thereafter. Specifically, BMW has:
- a. failed to disclose, at and after the time of purchase or lease and repair, any and all known material defects or material nonconformity of the Class Vehicles, including the Water Pump Defect;
- b. failed to disclose at the time of purchase or lease that the Class Vehicles were not in good in working order, were defective, and were not fit for their intended purposes; and
- c. failed to disclose or actively concealed the fact that the Class Vehicles were defective, despite the fact that BMW learned of the Water Pump Defect through consumer complaints as, as well as through other internal sources.
- 38. BMW has concealed the defect from consumers by not disclosing the true nature of the Water Pump Defect to Class Members, by not disclosing to Class Members that the repairs that are made in response to complaints relating to the Water Pump Defect are not permanent fixes for the problem, and by failing to disclose to Class Members that the Water Pump Defect is a serious safety hazard.
- 39. To this day, BMW still has not notified Plaintiff and the Class Members that their vehicles suffer from the Water Pump Defect, which is a systemic defect, and BMW has not reimbursed consumers for money paid by consumers to diagnose and/or repair the problem.
- 40. Plaintiff and Class Members have expended money to make repairs as a result of the Water Pump Defect, despite BMW's knowledge of the defect.
- 41. The Members of the Class have not received the value for which they bargained when they purchased or leased the Class Vehicles.

As a result of the defects, the value of the Class Vehicles has 42. diminished, including without limitation re-sale value.

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### TOLLING OF THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

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- Since the defects in the design or manufacture of the Class Vehicles 43. cannot be detected until the defect manifests itself, Plaintiff and the Class Members were not reasonably able to discover the problem until after purchasing or leasing the Class Vehicles, despite their exercise of due diligence.
- Plaintiff and the Class Members had no realistic ability to discern that 44. the Class Vehicles were defective until after Plaintiff and the Class Members experienced the Water Pump Defect. In addition, despite their due diligence, Plaintiff and the Class Members could not reasonably have been expected to learn or discover that they were deceived and that material information concerning the Class Vehicles had been concealed from them until manifestation of the Water Pump Defect. Therefore, the discovery rule is applicable to the claims asserted by Plaintiff and the Class Members.
  - Upon information and belief, BMW has known of the defect in the 45. Class Vehicles, and has concealed from or failed to alert owners and lessees of the Class Vehicles of the full and complete nature of the Water Pump Defect.
  - Any applicable statute of limitation has therefore been tolled by 46. BMW's knowledge, active concealment, and denial of the facts alleged herein. BMW is further estopped from relying on any statute of limitation because of its concealment of the defective nature of the Class Vehicles.

### **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

Plaintiff brings this lawsuit as a class action on behalf of herself and all 47. other Class Members similarly situated as members of the proposed Plaintiff Class pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 23(a) and (b)(3) and/or (b)(2). This

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action satisfies the numerosity, commonality, typicality, adequacy, predominance, and superiority requirements of those provisions.

- The Class and Sub-Class are defined as: 48.
  - Class: All Persons in the State of California who purchased or leased a Class Vehicle.

Sub-Class: All Class Members who are "consumers" within the meaning of California Civil Code § 1761(d) Excluded from the Class and Sub-Classes are: (1) Defendant, any entity or division in which Defendant has a controlling interest, and its legal representatives, officers, directors, assigns, and successors; (2) the Judge to whom this case is assigned and the Judge's staff; and (3) those persons who have suffered personal injuries as a result of the facts alleged herein. Plaintiffs reserve the right to amend the Class and Sub-Classes definitions if discovery and further investigation reveal that the Class and Sub-Classes should be expanded or otherwise modified.

- Numerosity: Although the exact number of Class Members is uncertain 49. and can only be ascertained through appropriate discovery, the number is great enough such that joinder is impracticable. The disposition of the claims of these Class Members in a single action will provide substantial benefits to all parties and to the Court. The Class Members are readily identifiable from information and records in Defendant's possession, custody, or control, as well as from records kept by the applicable State Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Typicality: The claims of the representative Plaintiff are typical of the 50. claims of the Class in that the representative Plaintiffs, like all Class Members, purchased and/or leased a Class Vehicle designed, manufactured, and distributed by BMW. The representative Plaintiff, like all Class Members, has been damaged by

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for notifying all Class Members of the problems with the Class Vehicles and for the

costs and expenses of repair and replacement of the Class Vehicles;

Whether Defendant should be declared financially responsible

- i. Whether Defendant breached the express terms of its own warranty by refusing to pay for repairs relating to the Water Pump Defect during the term of the warranty;
- j. Whether Defendant concealed and refused to disclose the nature of the Water Pump Defect from purchasers and lessees of Class Vehicles at the time of sale and otherwise.
- 52. <u>Adequate Representation</u>: Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class Members. Plaintiff has retained attorneys experienced in the prosecution of class actions, including consumer and product defect class actions, and Plaintiff intends to prosecute this action vigorously.
- all suffered and will continue to suffer harm and damages as a result of Defendant's unlawful and wrongful conduct. A class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy. Absent a class action, most Class Members would likely find the cost of litigating their claims prohibitively high and would therefore have no effective remedy at law. Because of the relatively small size of the individual Class Members' claims, it is likely that only a few Class Members could afford to seek legal redress for Defendant's misconduct. Absent a class action, Class Members will continue to incur damages, and Defendant's misconduct will continue without remedy. Class treatment of common questions of law and fact would also be a superior method to multiple individual actions or piecemeal litigation in that class treatment will conserve the resources of the courts and the litigants, and will promote consistency and efficiency of adjudication.

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#### FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of California's Consumer Legal Remedies Act, California Civil Code § 1750, et seq.

- 54. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 55. Plaintiff brings this cause of action on behalf of herself and on behalf of the members of the Sub-Class.
- 56. Defendant is a "person" as defined by California Civil Code § 1761(c) and defendant is guilty of committing representations.
- 57. Plaintiff and Class Members are "consumers" or "persons" within the meaning of California Civil Code § 1761(d).
- 58. By failing to disclose and concealing the defective nature of the Class Vehicles from Plaintiff and prospective Class Members, Defendant violated California Civil Code § 1770(a), as it made representations which were deceptive, represented that Class Vehicles had characteristics and benefits that they do not have, represented that the Class Vehicles were of a particular standard, quality, or grade when they were of another, and advertised the vehicles with the intent not to sell them as advertised. See Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1770(a) (4) (5) (7) & (9).
- 59. Defendant's unfair and deceptive acts or practices occurred repeatedly in Defendant's trade or business, were capable of deceiving a substantial portion of the purchasing public, and imposed a serious safety risk on the public.
- 60. Defendant knew that the Class Vehicles suffered from an inherent defect, were defectively designed or manufactured, would fail prematurely, and were not suitable for their intended use.
- 61. Defendant was under a duty to Plaintiff and the Class Members to disclose the defective nature of the Water Pump Defect, as well as the associated costs that would have to frequently be expended in order to repair the Class Vehicles due to the Water Pump Defect, because:

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- a. Defendant was in a superior position to know the true state of facts about the safety defect in the Class Vehicles, and relating to the Water Pump Defect;
- b. Plaintiff and the Class Members could not reasonably have been expected to learn or discover that the Class Vehicles had a dangerous safety defect until manifestation of the defect; and
- c. Defendant knew that Plaintiff and the Class Members could not reasonably have been expected to learn or discover the safety defect.
- 62. In failing to disclose the defective nature of the Class Vehicles,
  Defendant has knowingly and intentionally concealed material facts and breached
  its duty not to do so.
- 63. The facts concealed or not disclosed by Defendant to Plaintiff and the Class Members are material in that a reasonable consumer would have considered them to be important in deciding whether or not to purchase a Class Vehicle. Had Plaintiff and other Class Members known that the Class Vehicles had the Water Pump Defect, they would not have purchased a Class Vehicle.
- 64. Plaintiff and the Class Members are reasonable consumers who do not expect their Class Vehicles will experience a manifestation of the Water Pump Defect. That is the reasonable and objective consumer expectation relating to the Water Pump Defect.
- 65. As a result of Defendant's conduct, Plaintiff and Class Members have been harmed and have suffered actual damages in that the Class Vehicles are continually experiencing the Water Pump Defect, causing inconvenience, creating a serious safety hazard, and causing Class Members to spend money.
- 66. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's unfair or deceptive acts or practices, Plaintiff and Class Members have suffered and will continue to suffer actual damages.
  - 67. Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to equitable relief.

68. Plaintiff has provided BMW with notice of its alleged violations of the CLRA pursuant to California Civil Code § 1782(a). BMW failed to provide the appropriate relief for its violation of the CLRA within 30 days of the date of the notification letter. A true and correct copy of the letter is attached hereto as exhibit 1.

69. Thus, Plaintiffs, pursuant to § 1782(a) of the Civil Code, also seeks actual, statutory, and punitive damages in addition to equitable relief.

#### SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of UCL California Business & Professions Code § 17200, et seq.)

- 70. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 71. Plaintiff brings this cause of action on behalf of herself and on behalf of the Class Members.
- 72. California Business & Professions Code § 17200 prohibits acts of "unfair competition," including any "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business act or practice" and "unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading advertising."
- 73. Plaintiff and the Class Members are reasonable consumers who do not expect their Class Vehicles to experience water pump failure due to the Water Pump Defect. That is the reasonable and objective consumer expectation relating to the Class Vehicles.
- 74. It is Plaintiff's information and belief that Defendant knew that the Class Vehicles suffered from an inherent defect, were defectively designed or manufactured, would experience the Water Pump Defect, and were not suitable for their intended use.
- 75. In failing to disclose the Water Pump Defect, Defendant has knowingly and intentionally concealed material facts and breached its duty not to do so.

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- Defendant was under a duty to Plaintiff and the Class Members to 76. disclose the defective nature of the Class Vehicles because:
- Defendant was in a superior position to know the true state of a. facts about the Water Pump Defect in the Class Vehicles;
- Defendant made partial disclosures about the quality of the Class b. Vehicles without revealing the defective nature of the Class Vehicles; and,
- Defendant actively concealed the defective nature of the Class c. Vehicles from Plaintiff and the Class Members.
- The facts concealed or not disclosed by Defendant to Plaintiff and the 77. Class Members are material in that a reasonable person would have considered them to be important in deciding whether to purchase the Class Vehicles. Had Plaintiff and other Class Members known that the Class Vehicles had the Water Pump Defect, Plaintiff and the Class Members would not have purchased Class Vehicles.
  - Defendant continued to conceal the defective nature of the Class 78. Vehicles even after Class Members began to report problems. Indeed, Defendant continues to cover up and conceal the true nature of the problem. Defendant has failed to disclose to consumers that the Water Pump Defect exists. Defendant has also failed to reimburse consumers for costs incurred in connection with the Water Pump Defect.
  - By its conduct, Defendant has engaged in unfair competition and 79. unlawful, unfair, and fraudulent business practices.
  - Defendant's unfair or deceptive acts or practices occurred repeatedly in 80. Defendant's trade or business, and were capable of deceiving a substantial portion of the purchasing public.
  - As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's unfair and deceptive 81. practices, Plaintiff and the Class have suffered and will continue to suffer actual damages.

82. Defendant has been unjustly enriched and should be required to make restitution to Plaintiff and the Class pursuant to §§ 17203 and 17204 of the Business & Professions Code.

### THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(Fraud by Omission)

- 83. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 84. It is Plaintiff's information and belief that BMW knew or should have known that the Water Pump Defect in its Class Vehicles was a condition rendering the Class Vehicles defectively designed or manufactured, causing the Class Vehicles to fail prematurely and rendering the vehicles not suitable for their intended use.
- 85. Defendant concealed from and failed to disclose to Plaintiffs and the Class the defective nature of the Class Vehicles' water pumps.
- 86. Defendant was under a duty to Plaintiff and the Class to disclose the defective nature of the Water Pump Defect because:
- a. Defendant was in a superior position to know the true state of facts about the Water Pump Defect in the Class Vehicles;
- b. Defendant made partial disclosures about the quality of the Class Vehicles without revealing the defective nature of the Class Vehicles; and
- c. Defendant actively concealed the defective nature of the Class Vehicles from Plaintiff and the Class.
- 87. The facts concealed or not disclosed by Defendant to Plaintiff and the Class Members are material in that a reasonable person would have considered them to be important in deciding whether to purchase the Class Vehicles. Had Plaintiff and other Class Members known that the Class Vehicles had the Water Pump Defect, Plaintiff and the Class Members would not have purchased and

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leased Class Vehicles, or would have paid less for them.

- Defendant continued to conceal the defective nature of the Class 88. Vehicles even after Class Members began to report problems. Indeed, Defendant continues to cover up and conceal the true nature of the problem.
- Defendant concealed or failed to disclose the true nature of the design 89. or manufacturing defect consisting of the Water Pump Defect existing in its Class Vehicles to induce Plaintiff and the Class to act thereon. Plaintiff and the Class Members justifiably relied on the omission to their detriment. This detriment is evident from Plaintiff's and Class Members' purchase or lease of Defendant's Class Vehicles.
- Defendant continued to conceal the defective nature of the Class 90. Vehicles' water pumps even after Members of the Class began to report problems. Indeed, Defendant continues to cover up and conceal the true nature of the problem today, including denying reimbursement of repair costs related to repairs that have been necessary due to the Water Pump Defect.
- As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's misconduct, Plaintiff 91. and the Class Members have suffered and will continue to suffer actual damages

### RELIEF REQUESTED

- 92. Plaintiff, on behalf of herself, and all others similarly situated, requests the Court to enter judgment against Defendant, as follows:
- An order certifying the proposed Class and Sub-Classes, designating Plaintiff as named representatives of the Class, and designating the Plaintiff's Counsel as Class Counsel;
- A declaration that Defendant is financially responsible for b. notifying all Class Members about the defective nature of the Class Vehicles;
- An order enjoining Defendant from further deceptive c. distribution, sales, and lease practices with respect to the Class Vehicles, and to

1	repair the Class Vehicles so th	nat they will no longer possess the Water Pump
2	Defect;	
3	d. An award	to Plaintiff and the Class of compensatory, exemplary,
4	and statutory damages, includ	ling interest, in an amount to be proven at trial;
5	e. An award	to Plaintiff and the Class of any repair costs they are
6	owed;	
7	7 f. A declarat	ion that Defendant must disgorge, for the benefit of
8	8 the Class, all or part of the ill	-gotten profits it received from the sale or lease of the
9	Class Vehicles, or make full 1	restitution to Plaintiff and Class Members;
10	g. An award	of attorneys' fees and costs, as allowed by law;
11	1 h. An award	of attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to California
12	2 Code of Civil Procedure § 10	21.5.
13	i. An award	of pre-judgment and post-judgment interest, as
14	4 provided by law;	
15	j. Leave to a	amend the Complaint to conform to the evidence
16	6 produced at trial; and	
17	7 k. Such othe	r relief as may be appropriate under the circumstances.
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20		The Law Office of Robert L. Starr
21		The second secon
22		By: Robert L. Starr, Esq.
23		Attorneys for Plainfiff TRISH HERREMANS,
24	l.	individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated individuals
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**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL** Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b), Plaintiffs demand a 93. trial by jury of any and all issues in this action so triable of right. The Law Office of Robert L. Starr Dated: March 27, 2014 By: Aftorneys for Plaintiff individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated individuals 

Exhibit "1"

### The Law Office Of ROBERT L. STARR

23277 Ventura Boulevard Woodland Hills, California, 91364 Telephone (818) 225-9040 Facsimile (818) 225-9042

January 7, 2014

BY Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested And First Class Mail Number:

Ludwig Willisch Chief Executive Officer BMW of North America, LLC 300 Chestnut Ridge Road Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey 07677 Return Receipt # 7012 0470 0002 4772 9206

BMW of North America, LLC Care of CT Corporation System 818 7th Street Los Angeles, California 90017 Return Receipt # 7012 0470 0002 4772 9329

CLRA Letter Re: Min Cooper Water Pump Defect

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my client Trish Herremans ("HERREMANS").

Pursuant to the California Consumer Legal Remedies Act (California Civil Code section 1750 et seq.,) and specifically, sections 1782 (a)(1) and (2), I hereby notify you that BMW of North America, LLC ("BMW") has violated section 1770 of the CLRA by warranting, advertising, and selling defective vehicles, that it knew, or should have known, are and were at the time of sale defective, to thousands of consumers in California and throughout the United States. After selling said defective vehicles, BMW refused to provide coverage for defects, mechanical breakdowns, and damage that directly related to said known defects.

The BMW vehicles which relate to this correspondence are as follows, including the base, the S, and the John Cooper Works:

All Mini Cooper R55 model vehicles (also known as model year 2007- present Min Cooper Clubman);

All Mini Cooper R56 (also known as model year 2006-2013 Mini Cooper hardtop);

All Mini Cooper R57 model vehicles (also known as Model Year 2009-present Mini Cooper convertibles);

All Mini Cooper R58 model vehicles (also known as Model Year 2012-present Mini Cooper Coupe);

All Mini Cooper R59 model vehicles (also known as Model Year 2012-present Mini Cooper Roadster);

All Mini Cooper R60 model vehicles (also known as Model Year 2010-present Mini Cooper Countryman).

All of the above described vehicles are herein referred to as CLASS VEHICLE, or CLASS VEHICLES. All persons who have owned or leased, and who currently own or lease CLASS VEHICLES are referred to herein as CLASS MEMBERS.

Numerous CLASS MEMBERS have reported that CLASS VEHICLES have experienced water pump problems, such as water pump leakage, and water pump noise ("WATER PUMP DEFECT"). With regard to water pump leakage, this poses a serious safety hazard, because it can result in an effected vehicle's engine overheating. Engine overheating can result in an effected vehicle's engine failing to function while the effected vehicle is in traffic. When an engine fails to function in traffic, the effected vehicle loses the ability to accelerate. Furthermore, the effected vehicle's steering and braking abilities are severely diminished, due to the power braking and power steering systems not being able to properly function. These conditions are clearly a safety hazard. Furthermore, when water pumps make noise, the noise is often an indicator that the water pump will soon leak and/or fail to function, resulting in potential engine overheating and failure.

BMW has represented to consumers in BMW and Mini Cooper marketing materials that Mini Cooper vehicles are of good quality, reliable and safe. Unfortunately, due to the WATER PUMP DEFECT, the CLASS VEHICLES are not of good quality, are not reliable, and are not safe. To date BMW has not disclosed the WATER PUMPT DEFECT to consumers, has concealed the WATER PUMP DEFECT from consumers, and has not made any actual effort to immediately protect consumers from the serious safety problems relating to the WATER PUMP DEFECT. The nature of the WATER PUMP DEFECT is such that if it is not resolved, it is very likely that people will be seriously injured and killed.

I represent HERREMANS, a consumer who resides in California. HERREMANS has suffered damage and out of pocket expenses as a result of the WATER PUMP DEFECT.

HERREMANS is the owner of a 2009 Mini Cooper S, vin # WMWMF73579TT95691 (HERREMANS VEHICLE). HERREMANS purchased the HERREMANS VEHICLE as a new vehicle on or about November 15, 2008. On or about February 12, 2011, the HERREMANS VEHICLE underwent repairs due to the water pump leaking. The repairs were covered under the warranty. On or about January 11, 2013, the HERREMANS VEHICLE underwent repairs again due to the water pump leaking. This time the repairs were not covered under the warranty, resulting in HERREMANS having to pay over \$1,700.00 for repairs. Enclosed with this correspondence are the repair records relating to the water pump leaking. The repairs were necessary not as a result of normal maintenance, but as a result of a defect relating to the water pump.

At no time prior to HERREMANS purchasing the HERREMANS VEHICLE did BMW disclose the WATER PUMP DEFECT to HERREMANS, or to the general public. Furthermore, it is HERREMANS understands that BMW has not disclosed or even acknowledged the existence of the WATER PUMP DEFECT to any consumers prior to consumers purchasing CLASS VEHICLES, or at any subsequent time.

It is HERREMANS' information and belief that BMW, through its own internal testing, records of customer complaints, dealership repair orders, and other internal sources, was well aware and knew of the WATER PUMP DEFECT prior to BMW distributing the CLASS VEHICLES to Mini Cooper dealerships. Furthermore, it is HERREMANS' information and belief that BMW knew of the WATER PUMP DEFECT prior to HERREMANS suffering damage as a result of the WATER PUMP DEFECT. BMW failed to disclose and actively concealed the WATER PUMP DEFECT to consumers at the time of purchase or lease, and thereafter. BMW continues to conceal the existence, nature, and extent of the WATER PUMP DEFECT to consumers, even though the WATER PUMP DEFECT is a very serious problem which poses a safety hazard to purchasers of the CLASS VEHICLES, as well as to the general public.

It is HERREMANS' information and belief that even to this day, BMW has not implemented a fix relating to the WATER PUMP DEFECT in order to resolve the WATER PUMP DEFECT in the CLASS VEHICLES.

BMW's conduct in warranting, advertising, and selling the CLASS VEHICLES, knowing that they contain the WATER PUMP DEFECT constitutes the following violations of section 1770:

- 1. BMW represented that the VEHICLES had characteristics or benefits which they did not have (Section 1770(a)(5));
- 2. BMW has falsely represented that the VEHICLES were of a particular standard, quality, or grade when they are of another (Section 1770(a)(7)); and
  - 3. BMW advertised the VEHICLES with the intent not to sell them as advertised

(Section 1770(a)(9)).

Pursuant to section 1782 of the CLRA, based on the foregoing, we hereby demand that within thirty (30) days of receiving this letter, BMW:

- 1. Make all necessary repairs to all CLASS VEHICLES, so as to remedy all of the problems associated with the WATER PUMP DEFECT;
- 2. Provide monetary compensation, plus interest, to HERREMANS and other owners and lessees of CLASS VEHICLES, relating to all of the damages that these consumers have suffered as a result of the WATER PUMP DEFECT;
- 3. Repurchase each of the CLASS VEHICLES, and provide restitution of all damages, as allowed under California Civil Code Section 1793.2, 1793.22, 1794, and the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, inclusive of incidental and consequential damages that have resulted from the WATER PUMP DEFECT, and attorney's fees and costs.

Unless BMW takes such action as demanded above within (30) days after your receipt of this letter, I will file a lawsuit against BMW on behalf of HERREMANS, and each other consumer similarly situated, seeking restitution damages, and other damages as allowed under California Civil Code Section 1782, 1793.2, 1793.22, 1794, under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, as well as other related causes of action.

This demand is made pursuant to the rights and remedies allowed pursuant to 1782 of the CLRA. If you have any questions regarding this notice and demand, please contact me at (818) 225-9040.

Very truly yours,

Robert Starr, Esq.

Enc.

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## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

#### NOTICE OF ASSIGNMENT TO UNITED STATES JUDGES

		_	strict Judge	Margaret M. M	orrow	and the assigned
Magist	rate Judge is	Patrick J.	Walsh .			
	The	case number on all	documents filed with	the Court shoul	d read as follo	ws:
			CV14-2363-MMM	I(PJWx)	***************************************	
Pursuant to General Order 05-07 of the United States District Court for the Central District of California, the Magistrate Judge has been designated to hear discovery related motions.					District of	
	All discovery	related motions sho	ould be noticed on the	e calendar of the	Magistrate Jud	lge.
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	March 27	, 2014		By <u>C. Sawyer</u>		
	Date	e		Deputy Cle	erk	
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	A copy of this notice must be served with the summons and complaint on all defendants (if a removal action is filed, a copy of this notice must be served on all plaintiffs).					emovai action is
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Subsec	quent docume	ents must be filed at	t the following locati	on:		
X	Western Divis 312 N. Spring Los Angeles, C	Street, G-8	Southern Division 411 West Fourth St., S Santa Ana, CA 92701	Ste 1053	Eastern Divisi 3470 Twelfth S Riverside, CA	Street, Room 134
Failur	Failure to file at the proper location will result in your documents being returned to you.					

Robert L. Starr, Esq. (State Bar Number 183052) email: robert@starrlawmail.com THE LAW OFFICE OF ROBERT L. STARR 23277 Ventura Boulevard Woodland Hills, California 91364 Telephone:(818) 225-9040 Facsimile: (818) 225-9042

### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CENTRAL DISTRIC	T OF CALIFORNIA
TRISH HERREMANS, individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated individuals,  PLAINTIFF(S)  V.	CASE NUMBER <b>CV14-2363</b> MMM P3
BMW OF NORTH AMERICA, LLC.  DEFENDANT(S).	SUMMONS
TO: DEFENDANT(S): BMW OF NORTH AMERIC  A lawsuit has been filed against you.	CA, LLC.
Within 21 days after service of this summormust serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached □ counterclaim □ cross-claim or a motion under Rule	12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer obert L. Starr, Esq. , whose address is 91364 . If you fail to do so,

[Use 60 days if the defendant is the United States or a United States agency, or is an officer or employee of the United States. Allowed 60 days by Rule 12(a)(3)].

CV-01A (12/07) SUMMONS

### Case 2:14-cv-02363-MMM-PJW Document 1 Filed 03/27/14 Page 35 of 36 Page ID #:38

### UNITED STATE. DISTRICT COURT, CENTRAL DISTRICT C. CALIFORNIA CIVIL COVER SHEET

I (a) PLAINTIFFS (Check box if you are representing yourself □)  TRISH HEREMANS, individually, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated individuals,	DEFENDANTS BMW OF NORTH AMERICA, LLC				
(b) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address and Telephone Number. If you are representing yourself, provide same.)  THE LAW OFFICE OF ROBERT L. STARR 23277 Ventura Boulevard, Woodland Hills, California 91364 Telephone: (818) 225-9040 Facsimile: (818) 225-9042	Attorneys (If Known)				
	ENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES - For Diversity Cases Only				
□ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff □ 3 Federal Question (U.S.	(Place an X in one box for plaintiff and one for defendant.)  PTF DEF izen of This State  U 1 □ 1 Incorporated or Principal Place □ 4 □ 4  of Business in this State				
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	of Business in Another State				
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country					
V. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: JURY DEMAND: Yes No (Check	Yes' only if demanded in complaint.)  MONEY DEMANDED IN COMPLAINT: § Greater than \$5,000,000.00				
CLASS ACTION under F.R.C.P. 23: ✓ Yes □ No  VI. CAUSE OF ACTION (Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing and					
Class Action pursuant to CAFA with causes of action for violation of California	Consumer protection statues and 15 USC section 2301 et seq.,				
VII. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an X in one box only.)					
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AFTER COMPLETING THE FRONT SIDE OF FORM CV-71, COMPLETE THE INFORMATION REQUESTED BELOW.

CV-71 (05/08) CIVIL COVER SHEET Page 1 of 2

#### Case 2:14-cv-02363-MMM-PJW Document 1 Filed 03/27/14 Page 36 of 36 Page ID #:39

## UNITED STATE. JISTRICT COURT, CENTRAL DISTRICT CALIFORNIA CIVIL COVER SHEET

VIII(a). IDEN		is action been previo	ously filed in this court and	dismissed, remanded or closed? WNo 🗆 Yes	
	ATED CASES: Have an number(s):			are related to the present case? MNO DYes	
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		gencies or employe	es is a named plaintiff. If t	this box is checked, go to item (b).  California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country	
County in this TRISH HER	: District:* EMANS - Los Angele	s County, Califor	nia	Cantorna County outside of this District, State, it other than Cantorna, or Foreign Country	
(b) List the C	County in this District; Ca	lifornia County out	side of this District; State itees is a named defendant.	f other than California; or Foreign Country, in which EACH named defendant resides.  If this box is checked, go to item (c).	
County in this	s District:*			California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country	
				BMW OF NORTH AMERICA, LLC - Bergen County, New Jersey	
(c) List the C	County in this District; Ca	alifornia County out	side of this District, State i	if other than California; or Foreign Country, in which EACH claim arose.	
County in thi	s District:*			California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country	
Los Angeles	s County				
* Los Angele Note: In land	s, Orange, San Bernard	ino, Riverside, Ver	ntura, Santa Barbara, or tract of land involved	San Luis Obispo Counties	
	JRE OF ATTORNEY (C			Date March 27, 2014	
Notice to	o Counsel/Parties: The	CV-71 (JS-44) Civ	vil Cover Sheet and the info	ormation contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings ce of the United States in September 1974, is required pursuant to Local Rule 3-1 is not filed ating the civil docket sheet. (For more detailed instructions, see separate instructions sheet.)	
Key to Statist	ical codes relating to Soc	ial Security Cases:			
	Nature of Suit Code	Abbreviation	Substantive Statement	of Cause of Action	
	861	НІА	All claims for health insurance benefits (Medicare) under Title 18, Part A, of the Social Security Act, as amended. Also, include claims by hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, etc., for certification as providers of services under the program. (42 U.S.C. 1935FF(b))		
	862	BL	All claims for "Black Lung" benefits under Title 4, Part B, of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. (30 U.S.C. 923)		
	863	DIWC	All claims filed by insured workers for disability insurance benefits under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended; plus all claims filed for child's insurance benefits based on disability. (42 U.S.C. 405(g))		
	863	DIWW	All claims filed for widows or widowers insurance benefits based on disability under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended. (42 U.S.C. 405(g))		
	864	SSID	All claims for supplemental security income payments based upon disability filed under Title 16 of the Social Security Act, as amended.		
	865	RSI	All claims for retirement (old age) and survivors benefits under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended. (42 U.S.C. (g))		